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IN HONOR OF SACRAMENTO'S PRESTIGIOUS FIRE DEPARTMENTS

HON. DORIS O. MATSUI
OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to the men and women of Sacramento Fire Department's Swiftwater Rescue Team and the Sacramento Urban Search and Rescue Team for their tireless and heroic actions in response to Hurricane Katrina. Between the Sacramento Fire Department and the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District, sixty-one senior level managers, firefighters and rescuers went to the devastated areas in New Orleans and across the Gulf Coast to help those most in need. I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring and thanking some of our nation's finest first responders.

At the behest of FEMA, senior leaders from both departments were called on to manage the rescue efforts that grew to include hundreds of personnel from across the country. Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District Chief Rick Martinez led an Incident Support Team in Gulfport, Mississippi with Assistant Chief Mike Johnson, Dave Stoddard, Dave Odgers and Hank Linscott. Coordinating rescue efforts in New Orleans from this Incident Support Team was Assistant Chief Ed Vasques, Ford Davies and Larry Hopkins from the Sacramento Fire Department, along with Ron Pierce and Hernando Carson from the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District.

Sacramento's Swiftwater Rescue Team quickly responded to the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina by immediately flying to New Orleans to assist in the rescue efforts. Trained on the often unpredictable currents of the Sacramento and American Rivers, they quickly adapted to the situation in New Orleans. This team led by Sacramento Fire Department Assistant Chief Jay Bowdler and Battalion Chief Kristi Seargeant included Chris Costamagna, Craig Wiedenhoft, Michael Bartley, Charley Sprague, Jeff Cooke, Niko King, Brian Morr, Chris Swarbrick, Martin Cordeiro, Sage Peart, Dave Baldwin and Greg Powell.

Once on site, the team worked long days in the flooded city to rescue hundreds of people stuck on rooftops, trapped in their attics and stranded in the streets. Working in challenging and unfriendly conditions – at risk to their own health and safety –

these dedicated individuals brought hope and medical care to those most in need.

Members of Sacramento's well praised and highly trained Urban Search and Rescue Team also spent over two weeks working in many severely damaged communities along the Gulf Coast – searching for survivors trapped in their homes and in other buildings where they had sought shelter from the storm. Many on this team had previously responded to crises in Oklahoma City and at the World Trade Center following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Leading this team was Dave Whitt, a Battalion Commander with the Sacramento Fire Department.

Serving on the Urban Search and Rescue Team from the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District were Dave Brown, Jeff Metzinger, Kyle Johnson, Mark Wells, Mike McGuirk, Ron Von Allworden, Randy Gross, Mike Daw, Mike Hazlett, Jim Johnson, Chris Anaya, Bob Gorman, Randy Wootton, Tyler Wagaman, Mike Wiggington, Bob Santee and Phil Allen.

Also on this team from the Sacramento Fire Department were Erik Saari, Rick Lee, Lisa Stumpf, Doug Ross, Ernie Partridge, Randy Browning, Rodney Tateishi, Micki Anacleto, Scott Williams, Ken Murray, Joe Jackson and Ed Crum. They were joined by Dr. Dennis Gardner, Blake Rothfuss and Mike Kaszpurenko who served as medical and structural support staff. Teresa Ortenberger handled the cadaver dog.

Additionally, Darren Taylor, Scott McKenney and Larry Savage of the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District headed-up an Incident Logistic Management Team at the Stennis Space Center in Mississippi.

Each of these men and women left their families and loved ones in Sacramento; placing their lives on the line to come to the aid of their fellow citizens from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. And when Hurricane Rita hit land mere weeks later, many again answered the call for assistance. For their efforts, we owe them our thanks. I am truly honored to represent these renowned individuals and the fire departments they work for in Congress. Once again, I thank the women and men of the Sacramento Fire Department's Swiftwater Rescue Team and the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District's Urban Search and Rescue Team for their unwavering dedication and service to our country during this tragedy.